View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk
brought to you by CORE
provided by Journals @ The Mount

Finding One's Place to Be and Pee: Examining Intersections of Gender-Dis/ability in Washroom Signage

Mark Anthony Castrodale is a Disability Studies Professor at King's College (Western University), completed his PhD in the Faculty of Education (Western University), and holds an MA in Critical Disability Studies (York University). He draws extensively on the fields of Critical Disability Studies, Mad Studies, and Geographies of Disability, and on the works of Foucault and socio-spatial theorists to unpack institutional oppression, marginalization, and violence experienced by self-identifying disabled and mad persons.

Laura Lane is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Brock University. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature and a Master's of Education in sociocultural contexts from Brock University. Her research interests include forms of capital and privileged culture in university institutions; gender discourses in popular and digital media; educational possibilities of social media; technology in early-years classrooms; and discussion groups as sites for gender critique.

Abstract
In this article, we explore power relations in space by examining how the intersections of gender and disability are discursively represented in washroom signage. To do so, we analyze various washroom signs found in public spaces and airports that the authors encountered in their travels in North America, Hawaii, and Europe and how they depict bodies in spaces, times, and contexts. We discuss dominant discursive representations of gender and disability in relation to constructions of family, caregiving roles, and cultural location. We argue that washroom signs constitute gendered and disabled subjects and mediate their subjectivities. Furthermore, they function to regulate bodies in space, influencing notions of who belongs, who belongs where, and how different bodies are de(valued).

Résumé
Dans cet article, nous explorons les rapports de pouvoir dans différents lieux en examinant la façon dont les intersections du genre et du handicap sont représentés dans l'affichage des salles de toilette. Pour ce faire, nous analysons l'affichage des salles de toilette dans différents endroits publics et dans les aéroports que les auteurs ont remarqué pendant leurs déplacements en Amérique du Nord, à Hawaï et en Europe, et la façon dont les corps des gens sont représentés dans différents lieux, contextes et périodes. Nous discutons des représentations dominantes du genre et des handicaps relativement à la construction des familles, des rôles de soignant et de l'emplacement culturel. Nous faisons valoir que l'affichage des salles de toilette représente des personnes d'un certain genre et ayant certains handicaps, et nous discutons de leur subjectivité. De plus, l'affichage vise à réglementer les corps dans différents lieux, et influence les notions déterminant le sentiment d'appartenance des gens, à quel endroit ils appartiennent et la façon dont les différents corps sont (dé)valorisés.

Introduction

Spaces are sites of ongoing political contestation where individuals are perpetually engaged in struggles against oppression. They are also dynamic and constructed arenas for social and spatial justice as "space is filled with politics and privileges…justice and injustice, oppressive power and the possibility for emancipation" (Soja 2010, 105). People navigate and negotiate built spaces that constrain and enable thoughts and actions; they are shaped by and shape their socio-cultural lived geographies. In other words, we are "enmeshed in efforts to shape the spaces in which we live while at the same time these established and evolving spaces are shaping our lives" (71). Furthermore, spaces may be organized in ways that reproduce processes of exclusion (Claes, DeSchauwer, and Van Hove 2013). According to Henri Lefebvre (1991), space and the socio-political organization of space reveal social relationships, but these relationships are also mediated and shaped through spaces. Social spaces and society are, therefore, engaged in an ongoing dynamic relationship.

Symbols and signs discursively and directly mediate specific types of behaviours and movements in social spaces (Abel 1999; Boswell 1999). At the same time, social actors also have agency to perpetually make complex meanings of such discursive imagery. Washroom signs are examples of the inevitable messiness of space where representations of disability and gender speak beyond movement in space and into conceptualizations of identities and relationships, such as 'family', and 'caregiver' roles. Washrooms represent socio-spatial sites where people undertake bodily acts and functions extending beyond excretion of waste, bodily fluids, and materials, including such actions as changing clothes, adjusting contact lenses, blowing noses, brushing teeth, conversing, among others. People use washrooms to attend to various needs and search for such viable spaces by interpreting signage. "Misfitting" (Garland-Thompson 2011) demonstrates a socio-spatial-bodily mismatch where nonconforming gendered and disabled subjects encounter architectural barriers (592). These barriers subjugate gendered and disabled subjects' knowledges and embodied lived realities by limiting their ability to fit in certain lived spaces (Garland-Thompson 2011).

In this paper, we explore the power relations within space by analyzing discourses of gender and disability in washroom signage. To do so, we examine photographs of washroom signs that we collected in public spaces in major cities in North America, Hawaii, and Europe. In analyzing the washroom signage, we critically trouble their constitutive effects in relation to the intersections of gender and disability. Growing out of a conceptual understanding that space is socially produced, where society and space are dialectically and mutually constitutive (Lefebvre 1991), the central research questions that guided our inquiry are: How are discourses of gender and dis/ability represented through washroom signage? And, how are gendered and disabled subjects socio-spatially constituted through washroom signs and dominant washroom signage imagery?

In exploring these research questions, we first discuss intersections between gender, disability, and space as discussed in current literature and theory. We then detail our methodology, which draws on the work of visual image theorist Sandra Weber (2008). Next, we discuss our use of discourse analysis (Lazar 2005; Gee 2011), which we use to analyze key repetitive washroom signage. We conclude by arguing for sustained critique of signage and space, with a particular emphasis on continued analysis of the intersections between gender, disability, and space. In doing so, this paper reveals ways in which symbols of access connect with social practices, dominant ableist-heteronormative discourses, and systemic exclusion.

Gender, Disability, and Space

With shifts towards post-structuralist conceptualizations of gender identity and binaries, debates over washroom use and selection have emerged (Cavanagh 2010; Molotch and Norén 2010). However, little research has been conducted on the intersections of disability and gender in washroom signage. While some studies have examined disability and public washrooms as they pertain to issues of access (Kitchin and Law 2001; Titchkosky 2011), symbolic representations of disability in relation to other intersectional identity markers and their configured assemblages need further examination.

The disciplinary fields of Gender Studies and Critical Disability Studies allow for a deeper intersectional examination of gender-dis/ability in relation to privilege, knowledge-power relations, heteronormativity, and ableism among countless other salient issues. Gender Studies (Butler 1993, 1999; Shildrick and Price

1999; Cranny-Francis et al. 2003; St. Pierre 2000) and Critical Disability Studies scholars (Wendell 1996; Garland-Thompson 1997, 2005, 2006; Titchkosky 2003; McRuer 2006, 2010; Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009; Tremain 2013) explore the ways that gender and ability are socially and discursively constructed. Critical Disability Studies theorists examine power-knowledge relations, which problematically uphold able-bodiedness as a socially constructed and fictitious idealized way of thinking, acting, and being in the world (McRuer 2010; Titchkosky 2011; Goodley 2014). Non-normative movement, communication, observation, thought, and appearance may be the bases for othering and exclusion (Goodley 2014).

Importantly, non-conforming gendered and disabled subjects both share a biomedically pathologized past, where various institutions have attempted fix or alter those considered deviant so that they better adhere to gendered, heteronormative, and able-bodied social norms (Foucault 1995; McRuer 2010). Those that do not adhere to dominant or privileged representations of gender and ability are often "portrayed as helpless, dependent, weak, vulnerable, and incapable bodies" (Garland-Thompson 2002, 8). Cis-gendered, heteronormative, and able-bodied subjects are often viewed as ideal human beings (McRuer 2006, 2010). Thus, disabled subjects, for example, may be constituted as deviant by washroom signage directed at nondisabled subjects. This relates to Michel Foucault's (1995, 1999) notions of categorization, pathologization, dividing practices, and spatial partitioning, which are sustained through dominant discourses that sort and move individuals in particular social spaces. However, far from being docile, individuals have agency and often resist reductionist and alienating rules of conduct, social norms, and limiting values (Foucault 1995, 1999, 2007). As such, people perpetually struggle with mediated freedom and agency to interpret, think, and act critically and self-reflexively, while considering discursive meanings inscribed in washroom signs.

Geographies of Disability and Gender in Washroom Signage

Dis/ability and gender norms are upheld through socio-spatial interactions and collective understandings (social attitudes) and are further reinforced through built environments (physical spaces) (Kitchin and Law 2001; Imrie and Edwards 2007; Doan 2010; Titchkosky 2011). Disability geographers (Castrodale and Crooks 2010) have argued that accessibility/inaccessibility in the design of built environments significantly mediates who is and is not considered disabled in various socio-spatial realms. Furthermore, disability and gender are represented in social spaces and such representations shape how space is dynamically understood. Representations of gender and disability in washroom signs emerge as part of a broader discursive constitutive apparatus inscribed in space, while mediating socio-spatial relations. Thus, washroom signs represent an extension of other normalizing regimes (Foucault 1994, 1995, 1999, 2003) reinforced by what Robert McRuer (2010) terms "compulsory able-bodiedness" (383), heteronormativity, and gender binaries where disability, queerness, and gender nonconformity are often represented as deviant subjectivities.

Access to built environments is often a question of equity and social justice that raises questions about who, what, where, when, and why certain bodies are privileged in their use of public spaces (Imrie and Edwards 2007; Soja 2010). Rob Kitchin and Robin Law (2001) note that "space is socially produced in ways that deny disabled people the same levels of access as non-disabled people" (287). Furthermore, the demarcation of social spaces indicates who and how certain persons are to move and act in these specific physical spaces (Kitchin and Law 2001). Thus, while "a space may be *physically* accessible…[it may also] be *experienced* as oppressive" (Freund 2001, 697; italics in original). The paradoxical visible and invisible absence of disabled persons[1] in social spaces may attest to their exclusion in various social realms. Furthermore, as Anne Cranny-Francis et al. (2003) argue, "the gendering of categories of bodies is matched by a gendering of the spaces they are allowed or forbidden to enter and occupy" (213). Feminist geographers (Nash and Bain 2007; Valentine 2008; Berg and Longhurst 2010; Doan 2010; Longhurst 2010) have explored the ways in which space is explicitly and implicitly gendered through social norms that denote which sex and gender representation belongs in certain physical spaces. Furthermore, "repeated practices and behaviours in particular spaces… constitute identities in ways that make the availability of space a necessity for the possibility of the creation of new identities and/or the continuation of others"

(Nash and Bain 2007, 50). Thus, accessibility and the struggle for access (Titchkosky 2011) relate to gender and dis/ability norms, behaviours, codes of conduct, and subjectivities in socio-spatial realms. Disability and gender are not isolated to an individual's body, but extend into socio-spatial relations and are often regulated by symbols, such as washroom signage (Abel 1999; Browne 2004).

The racialization of public spaces offers an important example of how the regulation of bodies is directly linked to public institutions. In addition to washrooms being explicitly gendered and abled, they also have a long history of being racialized through Jim Crow signage; in the latter case, signs oppressively separated and restricted Black people and limited their social participation and access, while granting privileges to white individuals in parts of the Southern U.S. Under regulative disciplinary Jim Crow laws, racial segregation was mandated in public places, schools, washrooms, and drinking fountains (Abel 1999). As such, who belongs and what actions are accepted in washroom spaces as indicated through signs are connected with broader systems of physical and social exclusion (Prince 2009; Doan 2010). Despite the introduction of human rights codes aimed at promoting equal access to public spaces, forms of discrimination in this realm remain entrenched. Washroom signs thus play a disciplinary and regulatory role (Foucault 1995) in shaping how people are constituted and positioned in society in relation to such identity vectors as race, class, sex, gender, and dis/ability.

When needing to use the washroom, one must choose between "one of two doors with different labels" (Doan 2010, 643). These signs indicate who is permitted and who is not permitted to enter the washroom space. Sheila Cavanagh (2010) argues that "nowhere are the signifiers of gender more painfully acute and subject to surveillance than in sex-segregated washrooms" (1), even though there are few differences (apart from urinals) between the physical layouts of men's and women's washrooms. Instead, the policing of such spaces is contingent on signage and the social expectations of what such signage represents (Cavanagh 2010). As such, users may shift their self-identification to adhere to gendered norms.

In addition to upholding gender binaries, washroom signage may exclude disabled users and gender variant individuals. Washroom signs may be spatially and conceptually linked to ideas of dependency, exclusion, and marginalization for disabled users (Kitchin and Law 2001; Serlin 2010). Furthermore, those who do not neatly adhere to gender binaries may sometimes identify or become identified as temporarily disabled in order to access certain regulated socio-spatial realms (Doan 2010). For example, Petra L. Doan (2010), who identifies as a transgendered woman, documented how she felt she did not belong in either the women's or men's washroom and was directed by her employer to use the disabled washrooms. A consideration of the intersections of gender and disability reveal how nonconforming gendered and dis/abled subjects may encounter discrimination and a sense of non-belonging through "misfitting" (Garland-Thompson 2011) and being coded out of place (Hansen and Philo 2007; Doan 2010; McRuer 2010). Refusing to obey washroom signs and thus entering forbidden spaces represents an act of transgression against normative standards, which suggest people need to be categorized, labeled, sorted and separated. Importantly, socio-spatial designs impose mediating parameters on people's identities, experiences, and desires in social landscapes (Cavanagh 2010); they shape and delimit subjectivities in socio-spatial, material, and embodied ways. As Cavanagh (2011) attests, "you are where you urinate" (18) and washroom signage may play an intimate constitutive role in the (re)creation of gendered and dis/abled subjectivities.

Importantly, "discourse around public toilets has never been gender- or sex-neutral but is inflected through and through with gendered prescriptions for autonomy and self-reliance, as well as, of course, with rights and privilege" (Serlin 2010, 180). Dominant discourses of gender and dis/ability are inscribed in societal values and norms, and are supported by biomedical knowledge-power relations that objectify, pathologize, subjugate, and cast nonconforming gendered and disabled subjects as abnormal (Foucault 1995, 1999). Thus, dominant discourses of gender and ability are connected with autonomy, individuality, and hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Woloshyn, Taber, and Lane 2013; Goodley 2014). They devalue individuals who require help or assistance, given that qualities associated with entrepreneurial, independent, able-bodied neoliberal subjects are prized (Goodley 2014).

Methodology

In our analysis of washroom signage, we seek to problematize everyday washroom signs and their taken-for-grantedness using a feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar 2005) and a critical discourse analysis of visual images (Gee 2011). In connecting images to language, symbols found on washroom signage can support or disrupt dominant discourses associated with gender and dis/ability. We thus analyze images found on washroom signage in relation to normative representations of family, caregiving roles, and cultural location, with a focus on how the images are constructed and what the images are doing (Lazar 2005; Gee 2011). As Weber (2008) argues, "images can simultaneously generate multiple interpretations, and can call attention to the everyday by making it strange or casting it in a new light" (50). In conducting our analysis, we consciously reconsidered washroom signage in an effort to make the familiar strange. As such, we look at "language in use" (Gee 2011, 11).

Our qualitative research involved taking photographic images of washroom signage in various physical locations. Over the course of three years (2011–2013), we randomly took approximately fifty photos at airports and other public spaces in North American (Toronto, Ottawa, Los Angeles), Hawaiian (Waikiki), and European (Paris, London, Brussels, Bruges, Amsterdam, Rome) cities. We took photos of washroom signage that reflected our desire to unpack the discursive imagery of able-bodied gender norms (Titchkosky 2003; Serlin 2010) using gender and dis/ability as "anchor points" (Christensen and Jensen 2012, 112); the signs needed to depict (1) gender and/or dis/ability and had to (2) reflect thematic notions of family, caregiving roles, and cultural location. As such, our criteria for taking photos considered signage that upheld or challenged dominant notions of gender through the ways in which signage represented gender binaries and roles (Butler 1999; Cranny-Francis et al. 2003), dis/ability through the ways in which the signage constituted disabled and non-disabled subjects (Titchkosky 2011; Goodley 2014), and the intersections between both gender and dis/ability (Garland-Thompson 2005, 2006; McRuer 2006, 2010). All photos taken were analyzed and those that best reflected themes related to gender and dis/ability are examined in this paper.

Findings

In our analysis of the photographs collected, we found that washroom signage can be categorized into three main themes. First, we discuss the common symbolism found in the signage, unpacking the International Symbol of Access (ISA) along with common symbols for gender identifiers, which were prevalent in the majority of washroom signage we encountered. Next, we explore depictions of family imagery in washroom signage and associated caregiving roles by unpacking varying configurations, placements, sizes, and absences of gendered-dis/abled subjects and dynamic constituted subjectivities. Last, we discuss cultural location and questions of access, by analyzing signage that, in addition to common symbols, included culturally-specific contextualized images.

The Common Symbolism

In the case of washrooms, social relations are represented through signage. As opposed to signifying washrooms as "toilets" or "lavatories," they are often marked by masculinized and feminized images of bodies. As such, the binaries of masculinity and femininity are associated with binaries of male and female, thus synonymizing masculine with male and feminine with female. The masculine male is typically represented as a standing body with a head, two arms, and two legs, presumably wearing pants, while a feminine female is signified as a standing body with a head, two arms, and a triangular lower body, presumably wearing a dress. While these are the standard images for washrooms, other images may be included to signify alternate washroom options, such as the presence of an infant changing table or a space for disabled people. Spaces for infant changing tables are represented by a significantly smaller body with a head, two arms, and two legs, often positioned on the women's washroom sign. Accessible spaces for disabled people are represented by a wheelchair user with a head and a single line representing the body attached to the wheels of the chair, without any physical characteristics of sex and often positioned next to a gendered able-bodied figure.

The predominant symbol used to "indicate access in North America" is the "wheelchair stick figure" (Titchkosky 2009, 79; see also Ben-Moshe and Powell, 2007). According to Chelsea Jones (2013), the International Symbol of Access (ISA) conveys a "semiot-

ic imposition of otherness" (68). While the symbol of disability is non-gendered without common gender referents aside from its placement on signs relative to an able-bodied gendered symbol, the male and female figures are depicted as wearing gendered clothing. Additionally, the female washrooms are often the only washrooms that indicate the presence of infant change tables and thus associate caregiving responsibilities predominantly with women and de-familiarize men as parents/caregivers. Notably, men are not expected to fulfill these roles even if a change table existed in a male washroom (Malacrida 2009).

In addition to reproducing gender binaries and roles, washroom signage also reproduces notions of disability as other and asexual (McRuer 2006, 2010). The gender of disabled subjects is frequently reflected through close proximity to an able-bodied gendered figure. Unfortunately, such discursive imagery is often socially reproduced whereby disabled persons experience "invisibility as gendered beings" (Malacrida 2009, 114). Socially, hegemonic masculinity as represented by "strength, courageousness, and self reliance may be (re) negotiated, relied upon, or resisted by disabled men" (Gibson et al. 2013, 97), whereas notions of femininity are often closely tied with disabling discourses that characterize both women and disabled subjects as fragile, weak, and dependent (Scott 2015). However, in addition to these discourses, disabled women are also viewed as "unattractive, asexual and 'too burdensome' to be of interest to men" (Malacrida 2009, 104). They may also be considered too fragile, weak, and dependent to satisfy expected gender roles such as caregiving (Malacrida 2009). While the male/female images designate washrooms spaces, disability may or may not be represented and, if it is, it is notably marginalized in its size and location. These images pervade configurations of washroom signage and further inscribe dominant discursive representations of gender and ability, or gender-ability.

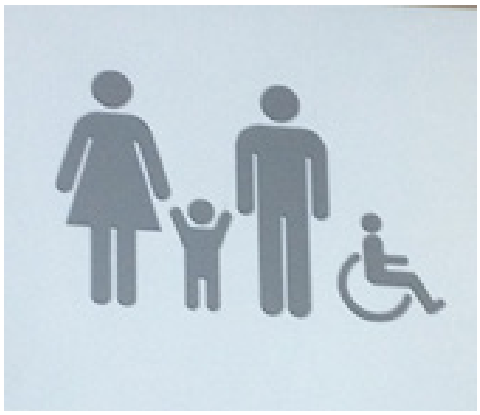

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Family Washrooms and Caregiving Roles

Washroom signs indicate nuclear heteronormative familial configurations of able-bodied characters. Gender roles pervade the symbolism, tying able-bodied women to caregiving and nurturing roles through female images being represented alongside children's change tables and family washrooms. In the images of washroom signage above, disability is either othered on a different sign or separated within a sign. Disabled persons are thus distanced from infant/child caregiving roles and perhaps infantilized, through the ISA wheelchair user disabled figure, in size and stature.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 represent heteronormative able-bodied families through different placements of gender, ability, and child symbols. In Figures 1 and 3, a child is positioned between the male and female figures, creating a heteronormative family structure. In both images, the child is reaching up to hold the male and female figures' hands. Notably, size also matters (Butler 1993) in that the size of the images has meaning and connects to the material constitution of gendered and disabled subjects. In Figure 3, the female figure is slightly smaller (less tall in stature) than the male figure. In both images, the disabled figure, as represented by a wheelchair access symbol, is included in the family depiction, but is smaller than both the male and female figures. It is positioned as equal to the child figure and is facing outward away from the family. In both figures 1 and 2, the ISA is also small in stature and size, pictorially represented at approximately the same size as a child and infant. Somewhat differently, in Figure 2, the male and female symbols are on a separate sign from the child and disabled subject, further aligning the child and the disabled subject. Not only is the disabled subject othered from the larger male and female subjects, but is placed beside the child image in a position of devalued dependency.

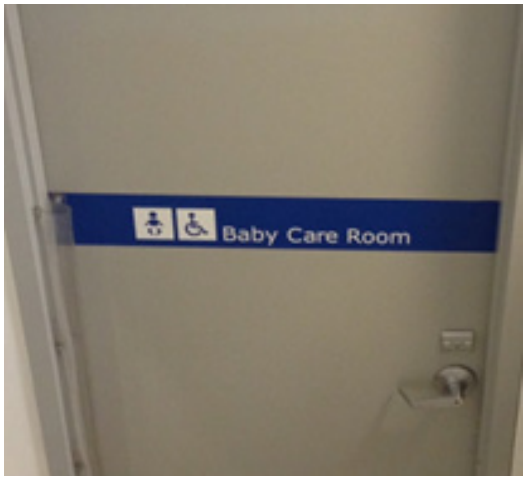

Figure 4

Such devaluation is evident in Figure 4, which infantilizes the disabled figure as the ISA and the symbol of an infant (depicted as the same size) are paired beside the label of the "baby care room."

Reflective of broader social realities, these washroom symbols seem to reproduce dominant perspectives on family: caregivers are able-bodied male and female figures and dependents are children and disabled persons (Malacrida 2009; Goodley 2014). Disability exists apart from the able-bodied heteronormative family. Thus, these images reinforce the exclusion of disabled subjects from 'normal' family life (Barnes, Mercer, and Shakespeare 1999). Bodies touching also reveal contact, closeness, proximity, and affinity. In these washroom access signs, disabled bodies rarely make contact with others. Additionally, the ISA figures (in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4), as represented by a wheelchair user, are turned sideways, which suggests that they are perpetually subject to an external watching gaze and unable to return the gaze of others.

Extending the associations between disability, gender, and caregiving roles, washroom symbols present who is the caregiver and who is the cared-for, through the placement of gender and disability symbols. Intended to denote accessibility, the ISA and the image of an infant appears on a segregated washroom door. Thus, the functions of infant changing and disabled access are separated from those individuals who can use able-bodied washrooms. Presumably, able-bodied persons may access and enter all washroom spaces.

While disabled subjects appear to be denied the possibilities of undertaking caregiving roles, women are undeniably tied to such responsibilities (Woloshyn, Taber, and Lane 2013; Cranny-Frances et al. 2003). Despite claiming to be a family restroom in Figure 5, the image painted on the wall suggests that able-bodied women are intended to be the caregiver of children in these spaces; not men or disabled persons. This image placement is further reproduced in Figures 6 and 7.

Figure 5

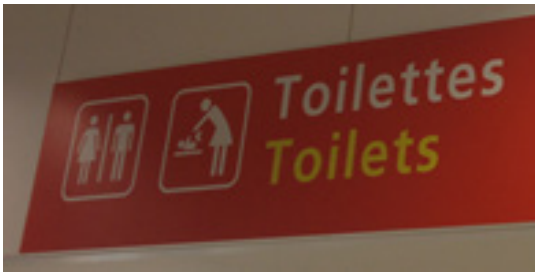

Figure 6

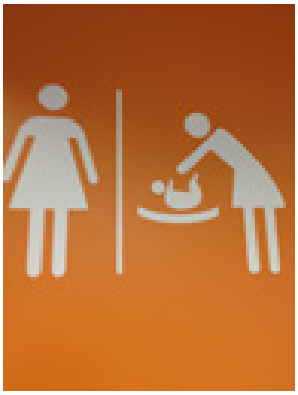

Figure 7

These images of caregiving in the form of changing an infant's diaper not only support able-bodied caregiver discourses, but maintain caregiving as women's (public) domestic labour. Such signage also has profound implications for disabled mothers who "face challenges in assuring the public of their appropriateness as parents and their capacity to mother adequately" (Malacrida 2009, 102). Signs equating disabled subjects with children reinforce notions of "the upside down family" (102), a social myth that "presumes that disabled mothers not only fall short of ideal mothering, but that they depend on their *children* for care and services" (102; italics in original).

Notably, we did not encounter an image of a solitary male in a caregiving role and likewise did not see a male caring for a child in male-indicated washrooms. The absence of child change stations that use a male figure supports the idea that normative gender roles are not to be transgressed in public spaces. While some washrooms may be beginning to represent gender roles in socially transgressive ways, such as featuring male caregiving images and introducing gender neutral washrooms, binary and normative male/female gender representations predominate in current signage and perceptions of gender. Queering spaces, sharing spaces, creating dynamic spaces, and opening washroom sites to new possibilities, uses, and users is an ongoing struggle to (re)imagine nuanced gendered-dis/abled subjectivities in space.

While washrooms, such as the family washroom in Figure 5, may support a number of different roles, functions, and persons in a single washroom space, the placement of the images that represent such family inclusivity still maintain heteronormative able-bodied family expectations. Additionally, having a single space for all persons may downplay or erase the need for disabled or women only washrooms. While discursive images may shape understandings of gender and ability, dominant heteronormative "cultural values dictate the need for sex-segregated spaces" (Ingrey 2012, 814). Thus, cultural norms might also shape washroom signage.

Cultural Location and Access

Access images also represent cultural aspects of disability and gender and various complex notions of citizenship (Prince 2009). Importantly, as Michael J. Prince (2009) notes,

> enabling citizenship entails deconstructing the dominant image of the 'disabled person' as someone with a visible, long-term physical impairment; pluralizing the image with the realities of diverse forms of disablements; and connecting the differences in relation to power relations and systems of inequalities. (48-49)

Prince stresses the need for cultural work in understanding disability issues and asks: "For persons with disabilities, what images and identities does society mirror back to them?" (32).

Societal meanings attached to gender and dis/ability are perpetually (re)made in socio-cultural-spatial interactions between various social actors. According to Tanya Titchkosky (2009), disability is perceived through cultural assumptions and is "made between people, in our imaginations," and "steeped in the cultural act of interpretation" (78). Moreover, disabled persons are often devalued and dehumanized subjects (Prince 2009; Goodley 2014). In the following examples, culture is represented by additional symbols specific to the location of the washroom signs. We explore

the examples of Jasper, British Columbia, Canada and Waikiki, Hawaii by focusing on how the additional cultural symbols interact with the washroom symbols.

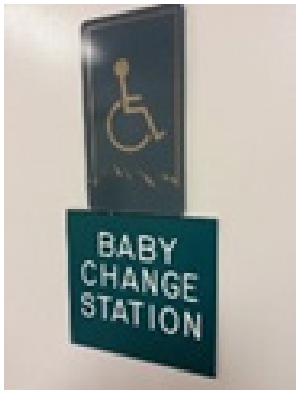

Figure 8

In Figure 8, the dominant access image is suspended over a Jasper-inspired rock-mountainous terrain. The image floats above the mountains, not touching or making contact with their jagged rough surfaces. The image also features the wording "baby change station," indicating the multiple uses of this particular washroom space. It is intended for disabled users and as a baby change space for anyone. The Jasper image of a wheelchair user on a mountainous, jagged terrain raises questions about whether or not the wheelchair user is truly symbolically welcome in this space. Or perhaps the image could be read subversively as disabled persons having agency to traverse rugged terrain and engage in outdoor physical activity. Nevertheless, this may represent an earnest effort to suggest that, irrespective of the rugged mountainous environment and an individual's mobility, *all* persons are welcome.

Notions of culture are also tied to dress and attire in that how one dresses not only indicates adherence to notions of gender (Butler 1999), but also extends to values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices (Barnes, Mercer, and Shakespeare 1999) embedded in localized societal relations. In popular culture, contemporary iconic attire in Hawaii may be represented through a Hawaiian floral lei and colourful floral Hawaiian shirts.

In Figure 9, the woman (Wahine) symbolized wears a bright yellow Hawaiian dress, a flower in their hair, and lei around their neck. In Figure 10, the man (Kāne) depicted wears a yellow shirt patterned with green and red flower like designs. Both figures are notably depicted as white subjects. In both Figures 9 and 10, the International Symbol of Access (ISA) remains unchanged, unembellished, unadorned with culturally-specific flowered flourishes. If iconic (albeit troubling and colonial) clothing and accessories are signs of contemporary Hawaiian culture, the unadorned ISA Hawaiian wheelchair-user is excluded or alienated as a full participant.

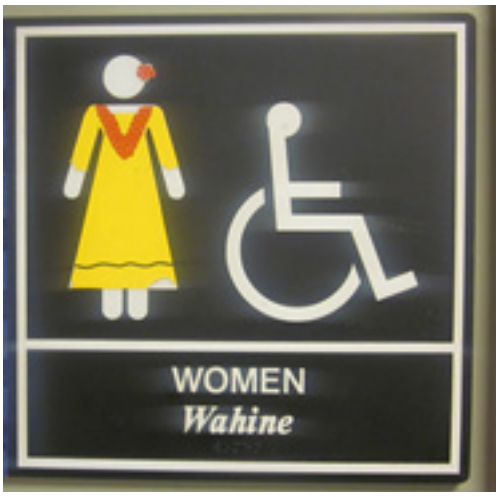

Figure 9

Figure 10

According to Titchkosky (2009), images of disability may reproduce normality (75). She further notes that, "inhabited by culture, however, means that whenever and however disability appears, we have a chance to examine the normatively grounded cultural meanings from which these images, our images, of disabil-

ity arise" (78). Here, normality is reproduced through gendering and disabling images. Cultural attire genders able-bodied citizens in that women wear Hawaiian leis, dresses, and flowers in their hair, while pant-less men wear Hawaiian floral shirts. The untouched, unchanged, universal, and somewhat sacred ISA wheelchair user ISA wears no such attire and thus disabled persons are not represented as being part of hegemonic colonial culture and gender regimes. Disabled individuals may thus experience "unequal citizenship" (Pothier and Devlin 2006, 1).

Concluding Discussion

The ways that symbols of access connect with social practices "often leave us morally complicit with harm and injustice unless we attempt to transform them" (Gee 2011, 12). While we recognize that images have multiple meanings, we argue that they are often connected to broader ableist, gendered, and heteronormative discourses. Images powerfully depict possible subjectivities and subject positions. Through depictions, configurations, and arrangements of gendered and dis/abled subjects, washroom signs represent difference and mark out societally ascribed subject roles. Poking and prying at these images, teasing them apart, and comparing and contrasting them illuminates their socio-cultural-political significance.

In this study, we drew from a selected sample of washroom signs that articulated discourses of gender and disability. Importantly, we did not encounter any washroom signage that directly disrupted discourses of heteronormativity or able-bodiedness. That is, we did not encounter gender neutral washroom signage or an alternative representation to the ISA for disability. Our intent here is to pose questions rather than provide definitive solutions. To question disability and gender is to trouble the neat ways washroom signs demarcate and code particular public social spaces. This is important as:

> thinking about the intersections of social differences in public spaces…is essential for gaining an understanding of how everyday embodied experiences are managed by discourses regarding competition for scarce resources, hetero-normative expectations, colonizing powers, and neo-liberal demands. (Titchkosky 2011, 72-73)

The perpetual meaning making of disabled and gendered access signs occurs between people who interact in these socio-spatial realms.

In a Foucauldian (1995) sense, signs thus represent disciplinary technologies, which function to sort, constitute, and regulate movements of gendered and disabled subjects in particular spaces. As such, when we need to use the washroom in a public space, we do not just need to find the toilet, we must also decide if we are going to use the "ladies' room," "men's room," or a third space if that option exists; our access to these spaces is contingent on our gender-ability. In reading the washroom signs, we are also examining the purposeful organization of social space (Soja 1989, 81).

This research has implications for the creation of gender neutral washrooms and how gender neutrality is represented. When considering such signage, it is also important to understand the ways that "sexed spaces come to exist through the continual maintenance and enforcement of gendered norms" (Browne 2004, 343). As such, people are not strictly regulated by signage, but enact agency to influence and (re)interpret ways in which signage comes to represent particular bodies. Furthermore, if disability "both intensifies and attenuates the cultural scripts of femininity" (Garland-Thomson 2002, 17), it is then important for disability and gender theory to work together in efforts to re-signify and reconstitute notions of family, caregiving, and cultural representation. Such resignification and reconstitution can begin through challenging prevailing social discourses, such as those represented through washroom signage. Notions of gender implicate particular attributes associated with ability, movement, capacity, and bodily aesthetic forms and functions; thus gender and disability are intersectionally connected to a sustained gender-ability identity politics.

It is our hope that in probing at the margins of gender and dis/ability representations in washroom images, new spaces may be opened to think about equality, human rights, and access for *all* persons. Although we critically examined washroom signage in this paper, our findings can be extended to consider various access symbols. Further research needs to incorporate the often subjugated views, voices, and knowledges of gendered-disabled subjects in ways that critically examine washroom images *in situ* in various localized spaces. There is a need to critically explore washroom sign im-

ages and posit other viable, hopefully non-reductionist, options—thereby opening up new spaces and subjectivities to be and pee.

Endnotes

[1] We prefer identity-specific language and reject defining disability as an individual deficit informed by a biomedical conceptual framework and categorizing label (Tremain 2008). Disability may be an inherent marker and part of people's identities. For extended discussions, see Titchkosky 2001; Brown 2011a; Brown 2011b where disabled persons advocate for this terminology and trouble the use of "person-first disability language, which separates disability as an identity vector from their personhood. Disability may also be a source of pride and a positive and nuanced identity which connects the disabled community. We would not say people with gayness, persons with womanliness, persons with whiteness, or persons with blackness. Similarly, disabled persons' personhood is not in question; disability connotes identity, complex socio-cultural subjectivities, and how people may experience the world as disabling. We draw on a social model of disability (Titchkosky 2001; Tremain 2008; Goodley 2014) to indicate that oppressive institutional structures, negative social attitudes, and barriers in built environments disable individuals. Moreover, "people-first language has not led to a greater understanding of disability and subsequent reduced levels of discrimination, nor to reduced levels of planned exclusions" (Titchkosky 2001, 132). People are disabled by an ableist society, which excludes them.

References

Abel, Elizabeth. 1999. "Bathroom Doors and Drinking Fountains: Jim Crow's Racial Symbolic." *Critical Inquiry* 25 (3): 435-481.

Barnes, Colin, Geof Mercer, and Tom Shakespeare. 1999. *Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Ben-Moshe, Liat, and Justin J.W. Powell. 2007. "Sign of Our Times? Revis(it)ing the International Symbol of Access." *Disability and Society* 22 (5): 489-505.

Berg, Laurence D., and Robin Longhurst. 2010. "Placing Masculinities and Geography." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 10 (4): 351-360.

Boswell, Maia. 1999. "'Ladies,' 'Gentlemen,' and 'Colored': 'The Agency of (Lacan's Black) Letter' in the Outhouse." *Cultural Critique* 41:108-138.

Brown, Lydia. 2011a. "The Significance of Semantics: Person-First Language: Why it Matters." *Autistic Hoya's Blog*. Last modified August 4, 2011. http://www.autistichoya.com/2011/08/significance-of-semantics-person-first.html.

_____. 2011b. "Identity and Hypocrisy: A Second Argument Against Person-First Language." *Autistic Hoya's Blog*. Last modified November 28, 2011. http://www.autistichoya.com/2011/11/identity-and-hypocrisy-second-argument.html.

Browne, Kath. 2004. "Genderism and the Bathroom Problem: (Re)materialising Sexed Sites, (Re)creating Sexed Bodies." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 11 (3): 321-346.

Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. London: Routledge.

_____. 1999. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.

Castrodale, Mark, and Valorie A. Crooks. 2010. "The Production of Disability Research in Human Geography: An Introspective Examination." *Disability and Society* 25 (1): 89-102.

Cavanagh, Sheila L. 2010. *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Hygienic Imagination*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

_____. 2011. "You Are Where You Urinate." *The Gay and Lesbian Review* 18 (4): 18-20.

Christensen, Ann-Dorte, and Sune Qvotrup Jensen. 2012. "Doing Intersectional Analysis: Methodological Implications for Qualitative Research." *Nordic Journal of Feminist Gender Research* 20 (2): 109-125.

Claes, Lien, Elisabeth De Schauwer, and Geert Van Hove. 2013. "Disability Studies and Social Geography Make a Good Marriage: Research on Life Trajectories of People with Intellectual Disabilities and Additional

Mental Health Problems." In *Emerging Perspectives on Disability Studies*, edited by Matthew Wappet and Katrina Arndt, 68-97. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Connell, Robert W., and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender and Society* 19 (6): 829-859.

Cranny-Francis, Anne, Wendy Waring, Pam Stavropoulos, and Joan Kirkby. 2003. *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 2013. "Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research." In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research,* edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 1-19. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Doan, Petra L. 2010. "The Tyranny of Gendered Spaces: Reflections From Beyond the Gender Dichotomy." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 17 (5): 635-654.

Foucault, Michel. 1984. "Space, Knowledge, and Power." In *The Foucault Reader,* edited by Paul Rabinow, 239-256. New York: Pantheon.

_____. 1994. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books.

_____. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Second Edition. New York: Vintage Books.

_____. 1999. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*. Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Picador.

_____. 2003. *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. London: Routledge.

_____. 2007. *The Politics of Truth: A History of the Present*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

Freund, Peter. 2001. "Bodies, Disability and Spaces: The Social Model and Disabling Spatial Organizations." *Disability and Society* 16 (5): 689-706.

Garland-Thompson, Rosemarie. 1997. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Literature and Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.

_____. 2002. "Integrating Disability; Transforming Feminist Theory." *NWSA Journal* 14 (3): 1-32.

_____. 2005. "Feminist Disability Studies." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30 (2): 1577-1587.

_____. 2006. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory." In *The Disability Studies Reader,* edited by Lennard J. Davis, 257-275. New York: Routledge.

_____. 2011. "Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept." *Hypatia* 26 (3): 591-609.

Gee, James Paul. 2011. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*. Third Edition. New York: Routledge.

Gibson, Barbara E., Bhavnita Mistry, Brett Smith, Karen K. Yoshida, David Abbott, Sally Lindsay, and Yani Hamdani. 2013. "Becoming Men: Gender, Disability, and Transitioning to Adulthood." *Health* 18 (1): 95-114.

Goodley, Dan. 2014. *Dis/ability Studies: Theorising Disablism and Ableism*. New York: Routledge.

Hansen, Nancy, and Philo, Chris. 2007. "The Normality of Doing Things Differently: Bodies, Space and Disability Geography." *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 98 (4): 493-506.

Ingrey, Jennifer C. 2012. "The Public School Washroom as Analytic Space for Troubling Gender: Investigating the Spatiality of Gender Through Students' Self-Knowledge." *Gender and Education* 24 (7): 799-817.

Imrie, Rob, and Claire Edwards. 2007. "The Geographies of Disability: Reflections on the Development of a Sub-Discipline." *Geography Compass* 1 (3): 623-640.

Jones, Chelsea. 2013. "'For *Them*, Not *Us*': How Ableist Interpretations of the International Symbol of Access Make Disability." *Critical Disability Discourse/Discours*

Critiques dans le Champ du Handicap 5: 67-93.

Kitchin, Rob, and Robin Law. 2001. "The Socio-Spatial Construction of (In)Accessible Public Toilets." *Urban Studies* 38 (2): 287-298.

Lazar, Michelle M. 2005. "Politicizing Gender in Discourse: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as Political Perspective and Praxis." In *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse,* edited by Michelle M. Lazar, 1-30. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Massachusetts, USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Longhurst, Robyn. 2010. "Viewpoint: The Body and Geography." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 2 (1): 97-106.

Malacrida, Claudia. 2009. "Performing Motherhood in a Disablist World: Dilemmas of Motherhood, Femininity and Disability." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 22 (1): 99-117.

McRuer, Robert. 2006. "We Were Never Identified: Feminism, Queer Theory, and a Disabled World." *Radical History Review* 94 (Winter): 148-154.

_____. 2010. "Compulsory Ablebodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence." In *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard Davis, 383–392. London: Routledge.

Meekosha, Helen, and Russell Shuttleworth. 2009. "What's So 'Critical' about Critical Disability Studies?" *Australian Journal of Human Rights* 15 (1): 47–75.

Molotch, Harvey, and Laura Norén, eds. 2010. *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*. New York: New York University Press.

Nash, Catherine Jean, and Alison Bain. 2007. "'Reclaiming Raunch'? Spatializing Queer Identities at Toronto Women's Bathhouse Events." *Social & Cultural Geography* 8 (1): 47-62.

Pothier, Dianne, and Richard Devlin. 2006. *Critical Disability Theory: Essays in Philosophy, Politics, Policy, and Law*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Prince, Michael J. 2009. *Absent Citizens: Disability Politics and Policy in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Scott, Julie-Ann. 2015. "Almost Passing: A Performance Analysis of Personal Narratives of Physically Disabled Femininity." *Women's Studies in Communication* 38 (2): 227-249.

Serlin, David. 2010. "Pissing Without Pity." In *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*, edited by Helen Molotch and Laura Norén, 167-85. New York: New York University Press.

Shildrick, Margrit, and Janet Price. 1999. "Openings on the Body: A Critical Introduction." In *Feminist Theory and the Body,* edited by Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, 1-14. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Siebers, Tobin. 2001. "Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body." *American Literary History* 13 (4): 37-54.

St. Pierre. Elizabeth A. 2000. "Poststructural Feminism in Education: An Overview." *Qualitative Studies in Education* 13 (5): 477-515.

Soja, Edward W. 1989. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. New York: Verso.

_____. 2010. *Seeking Spatial Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Titchkosky, Tanya. 2001. "Disability: A Rose by Any Other Name? 'People-First' Language in Canadian Society." *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 38 (2): 125-140.

_____. 2003. *Disability, Self, and Society*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

_____. 2009. "Disability Images and the Art of The-

orizing Normality." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 22 (1): 75-84.

_____. 2011. *The Question of Access: Disability, Space, Meaning*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Tremain, Shelly. 2008. *Foucault and the Government of Disability*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

_____. 2013. "Introducing Feminist Philosophy of Disability." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 33(4): 1-37.

Weber, Sandra. 2008. "Visual Images in Research." In *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, edited by Knowles J. Gary and Ardra L. Cole, 41-54. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc.

Wendell, Susan. 1996. *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*. New York: Routledge.

_____. 2006. "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability." In *The Disability Studies Reader,* edited by Lennard J. Davis, 243-257. New York: Routledge.

Woloshyn, Vera, Nancy Taber, and Laura Lane. 2013. "Discourses of Masculinity and Femininity in *The Hunger Games*: 'Scared,' 'Bloody,' and 'Stunning.'" *International Journal of Social Science Studies* 1 (1): 150-160.

Valentine, Gill. 2008. "Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography." *The Professional Geographer* 59 (1): 10-21.